

The Overwintering of Some Captive Indigenous Reptiles in Perth.

—Captured during the spring and summer of 1965, a group of reptiles (14 Tiger Snakes, *Notchis scutatus occidentalis*; 16 Dugites, *Demansia affinis*; 4 Gwardars, *Demansia nuchalis*; Western Blue-tongues, *Tiliqua occipitalis occipitalis*; 10 Shinglebacks (Bobtails), *Trachydosaurus rugosus rugosus*) were maintained in an ideal environment at a constant temperature of 68°-70° F. By January 1966 it became necessary to use these premises for other purposes. The reptile collection was then removed to two outbuildings in which temperature fluctuations were not controlled. The Tiger Snakes were housed in an asbestos garage and the remainder in a brick-built garage. Under these conditions at any time of the year, the reptiles' environmental temperature would tend to be lower than the official maximum as recorded by the Bureau of Meteorology. At no time were the caged animals subjected to direct sunlight. It was foreseen that the collection would have to remain in these far from ideal conditions for the winter and the following measures were taken.

All reptile cages were supplied with a floor covering of white-wood sawdust two inches deep. The reptiles were fed to repletion during a period of four weeks prior to the onset of cold weather. Adult snakes voluntarily ingested an average of eight adult mice; three half-grown snakes ingested an average of five immature mice. The lizards received tomatoes and minced meat ad lib. The cages were in semi-darkness and the occupants were observed each week-end when water pots were replenished if necessary.

During June, July and early August all voluntary diurnal activity ceased. At mid-week inspections, 80% of the Dugites and Gwardars remained quiescent when their cages were moved and the occupant closely observed, the remainder attempted to move or strike with marked unco-ordination. Tiger Snakes were little affected by the lower temperatures and could flatten the hood and strike with a high degree of accuracy.

The lizards remained immobile and had to be touched and stirred to determine whether alive or dead.

During late August signs of voluntary mobility became noticeable, some Bobtails took their first post-hibernatory meal of minced-meat and malt extract (August 13). Some Tiger Snakes ingested adult frogs (August 14), Blue-tongued lizards refused to eat and to the end of August Dugites had not fed.

Temperatures recorded by the Perth Meteorology Bureau (in degrees Fahrenheit) for the three-month period ending August 31 were as follows:—mean maximum 63.01, mean minimum 46.6, lowest recorded 39.0.

By September no deaths had been recorded in the collection of 51 assorted reptiles and outwardly severe emaciation was not apparent.

We are indebted to the Perth Bureau of Meteorology for climatic statistics as quoted.

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